

Rise of the Caliphates

After Muhammad's death (PBUH), many Arabian tribes rejected Islam or withheld the alms tax established by Muhammad. Many tribes claimed that they had submitted to Muhammad and that with Muhammad's death, their allegiance had ended. Caliph Abu Bakr insisted that they had not just submitted to a leader, but joined the Islamic community of Ummah.

To retain the cohesion of the Islamic state, Abu Bakr divided his Muslim army to force the Arabian tribes into submission. After a series of successful campaigns, Abu Bakr's general Khalid ibn Walid defeated a competing prophet and the Arabian peninsula was united under the caliphate in Medina. Once the rebellions had been quelled, Abu Bakr began a war of conquest. In just a few short decades, his campaigns led to one of the largest empires in history. Muslim armies conquered most of Arabia by 633, followed by north Africa, Mesopotamia, and Persia, significantly shaping the history of the world through the spread of Islam.

Rashidun Caliphate (632–661)

Abu Bakr nominated Umar as his successor on his deathbed. Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph, was killed by a Persian named Piruz Nahavandi. Umar's successor, Uthman ibn Affan, was elected by a council of electors (Majlis). Uthman was killed by members of a disaffected group. Ali then took control, but was not universally accepted as caliph by the governors of Egypt, and later by some of his own guard. He faced two major rebellions and was assassinated by Abd al-Rahman, a Kharijite. Ali's tumultuous rule lasted only five years. This period is known as the Fitna, or the first Islamic civil war.

The followers of Ali later became the Shi'a minority sect of Islam, which rejects the legitimacy of the first three caliphs. The followers of all four Rashidun caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali) became the majority Sunni sect. Under the Rashidun, each region (Sultanate) of the caliphate had its own governor (Sultan). Muawiyah, a relative of Uthman and governor (Wali) of Syria, became one of Ali's challengers, and after Ali's assassination managed to overcome the other claimants to the caliphate. Muawiyah transformed the caliphate into a hereditary office, thus founding the Umayyad dynasty. In areas that were previously under Sassanid Persian or Byzantine rule, the caliphs lowered taxes, provided greater local autonomy (to their delegated governors), granted greater religious freedom for Jews and some indigenous Christians, and brought peace to peoples demoralized and disaffected by the casualties and heavy taxation that resulted from the decades of Byzantine-Persian warfare.

Expansion Under the Umayyad Caliphates

The Umayyad Caliphate, the second of the four major Arab caliphates established after the death of Muhammad, expanded the territory of the Islamic state to one of the largest empires in history.

Key Points

- The Umayyad Caliphate, which emerged after the Rashidun Caliphate collapsed, was characterized by hereditary elections and territory expansion.
- The Umayyad Caliphate became one of the largest unitary states in history and one of the few states to ever extend direct rule over three continents.
- When the Abbasid dynasty revolted against the Umayyads and killed many of their ruling family members, a few Umayyads escaped to the Iberian peninsula and founded the Cordoba Caliphate, characterized by peaceful diplomacy, religious tolerance, and cultural flourishing.

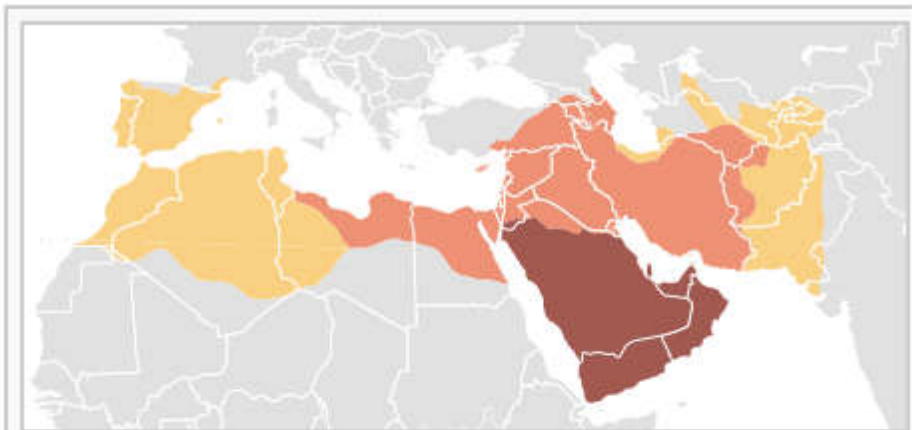
Key Terms

- **Al-Andalus:** Also known as Muslim Spain or Islamic Iberia, a medieval Muslim territory and cultural domain occupying at its peak most of modern-day Spain and Portugal.
- **Dome of the Rock:** A shrine located on the Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem.
- **Umayyad Caliphate:** The second of the four major Arab caliphates established after the death of Muhammad.

Umayyad Caliphate (661–750)


The Umayyad Caliphate was the second of the four major Arab caliphates established after the death of Muhammad. This caliphate was centered on the Umayyad dynasty, hailing from Mecca. The Umayyad family had first come to power under the third caliph, Uthman ibn Affan (r. 644–656), but the Umayyad regime was founded by Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan, long-time governor of Syria, after the end of the First Muslim Civil War in 661 CE. Syria remained the Umayyads' main power base thereafter, and Damascus was their capital.


Under the Umayyads, the caliphate territory grew rapidly. The Islamic Caliphate became one of the largest unitary states in history, and one of the few states to ever extend direct rule over three continents (Africa, Europe, and Asia). The Umayyads incorporated the Caucasus, Transoxiana, Sindh, the Maghreb, and the Iberian Peninsula (Al-Andalus) into the Muslim world. At its greatest extent, the Umayyad Caliphate covered 5.79 million square miles and included 62 million people (29% of the world's population), making it the fifth largest empire in history in both area and proportion of the world's population. Although the Umayyad Caliphate did not rule all of the Sahara, nomadic Berber tribes paid homage to the caliph. However, although these vast areas may have recognized the supremacy of the caliph, de facto power was in the hands of local sultans and emirs.



Expansion of the caliphate under the Umayyads:

 Expansion under Muhammad, 622–632

 Expansion during the Rashidun Caliphate, 632–661

 Expansion during the Umayyad Caliphate, 661–750

Expansion of the caliphate: This map shows the extension of Islamic rule under Muhammad, the Rashidun Caliphate, and the Umayyad Caliphate

The Umayyad dynasty was not universally supported within the Muslim community for a variety of reasons, including their hereditary election and suggestions of impious behavior. Some Muslims felt that only members of Muhammad's Banu Hashim clan or those of his own lineage, such as the descendants of Ali, should rule. Some Muslims thought that Umayyad taxation and administrative practices were unjust. While the non-Muslim population had autonomy, their judicial matters were dealt with in accordance with their own laws and by their own religious heads or their appointees. Non-Muslims paid a poll tax for policing to the central state. Muhammad had stated explicitly during his lifetime that each religious minority should be allowed to practice its own religion and govern itself, and the policy had on the whole continued.

There were numerous rebellions against the Umayyads, as well as splits within the Umayyad ranks, which notably included the rivalry between Yaman and Qays. Allegedly, The Sunnis killed Ali's son Hussein and his family at the Battle of Karbala in 680, solidifying the Shi'a-Sunni split. Eventually, supporters of the Banu Hashim and the supporters of the lineage of Ali united to bring down the Umayyads in 750. However, the Shi'at 'Alī, "the Party of Ali," were again disappointed when the Abbasid

dynasty took power, as the Abbasids were descended from Muhammad's uncle `Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib, and not from Ali.

The Abbasid victors desecrated the tombs of the Umayyads in Syria, sparing only that of Umar II, and most of the remaining members of the Umayyad family were tracked down and killed. When Abbasids declared amnesty for members of the Umayyad family, eighty gathered to receive pardons, and all were massacred. One grandson of Hisham, Abd al-Rahman I, survived and established a kingdom in Al-Andalus (Moorish Iberia), proclaiming his family to be the Umayyad Caliphate revived.

Umayyad Dynasty in Cordoba, Spain

The revival of the Umayyad Caliphate in Al-Andalus (what would become modern Spain) was called the Caliphate of Córdoba, which lasted until 1031. The period was characterized by an expansion of trade and culture, and saw the construction of masterpieces of al-Andalus architecture.

The caliphate enjoyed increased prosperity during the 10th century. Abd-ar-Rahman III united al-Andalus and brought the Christian kingdoms of the north under control through force and diplomacy. Abd-ar-Rahman stopped the Fatimid advance into caliphate land in Morocco and al-Andalus. This period of prosperity was marked by increasing diplomatic relations with Berber tribes in north Africa, Christian kings from the north, and France, Germany, and Constantinople.

Córdoba was the cultural and intellectual center of al-Andalus. Mosques, such as the Great Mosque, were the focus of many caliphs' attention. The caliph's palace, Medina Azahara, was on the outskirts of the city, and had many rooms filled with riches from the East. The library of Al-Ḥakam II was one of the largest libraries in the world, housing at least 400,000 volumes, and Córdoba possessed translations of ancient Greek texts into Arabic, Latin and Hebrew. During the Umayyad Caliphate period, relations between Jews and Arabs were cordial; Jewish stonemasons helped build the columns of the Great Mosque. Al-Andalus was subject to eastern cultural influences as well. The musician Ziryab is credited with bringing hair and clothing styles, toothpaste, and deodorant from Baghdad to the Iberian peninsula. Advances in science, history, geography, philosophy, and language occurred during the Umayyad Caliphate as well.

Legacy of the Umayyad Caliphate

The Umayyad caliphate was marked both by territorial expansion and by the administrative and cultural problems that such expansion created. Despite some notable exceptions, the Umayyads tended to favor the rights of the old Arab families, and in particular their own, over those of newly converted Muslims (mawali). Therefore, they held to a less universalist conception of Islam than did many of their rivals.

During the period of the Umayyads, Arabic became the administrative language, in which state documents and currency were issued. Mass conversions brought a large

influx of Muslims to the caliphate. The Umayyads also constructed famous buildings such as the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem and the Umayyad Mosque at Damascus.

According to one common view, the Umayyads transformed the caliphate from a religious institution (during the Rashidun) to a dynastic one. However, the Umayyad caliphs do seem to have understood themselves as the representatives of God on Earth.

The Umayyads have met with a largely negative reception from later Islamic historians, who have accused them of promoting a kingship (*mulk*, a term with connotations of tyranny) instead of a true caliphate (*khilafa*). In this respect it is notable that the Umayyad caliphs referred to themselves not as *khalifat rasul Allah* ("successor of the messenger of God," the title preferred by the tradition), but rather as *khalifat Allah* ("deputy of God").

Many Muslims criticized the Umayyads for having too many non-Muslim, former Roman administrators in their government. St. John of Damascus was also a high administrator in the Umayyad administration. As the Muslims took over cities, they left the people's political representatives and the Roman tax collectors and administrators. The people's political representatives calculated and negotiated taxes. The central government and the local governments got paid respectively for the services they provided. Many Christian cities used some of the taxes to maintain their churches and run their own organizations. Later, the Umayyads were criticized by some Muslims for not reducing the taxes of the people who converted to Islam.

Spread of Islam

In the years following the Prophet Muhammad's death, the expansion of Islam was carried out by his successor caliphates, who increased the territory of the Islamic state and sought converts from both polytheistic and monotheistic religions.

Key Points

- The expansion of the Arab Empire in the years following the Prophet Muhammad's death led to the creation of caliphates, who occupied a vast geographical area and sought converts to Islamic faith.
- The people of the Islamic world created numerous sophisticated centers of culture and science with far-reaching mercantile networks, travelers, scientists, hunters, mathematicians, doctors, and philosophers.
- Historians distinguish between two separate strands of converts of the time. One is animists and polytheists of tribal societies of the Arabian Peninsula and the Fertile crescent; the other is the monotheistic populations of the Middle Eastern agrarian and urbanized societies.
- The Arab conquerors generally respected the traditional middle-Eastern pattern of religious pluralism with regard to the conquered populations, respecting the practice of other faiths in Arab territory, although widespread conversions to Islam came about as a result of the breakdown of historically religiously organized societies.

Key Terms

- **Zoroastrianism:** an ancient Iranian religion and religious philosophy that arose in the eastern ancient Persian Empire, when the religious philosopher Zoroaster simplified the pantheon of early Iranian gods into two opposing forces.
- **Imam:** An Islamic leadership position, most commonly in the context of a worship leader of a mosque and Sunni Muslim community.

Overview

The expansion of the Arab Empire in the years following the Prophet Muhammad's death led to the creation of caliphates occupying a vast geographical area. Conversion to Islam was boosted by missionary activities, particularly those of Imams, who easily intermingled with local populace to propagate religious teachings. These early caliphates, coupled with Muslim economics and trading and the later expansion of the Ottoman Empire, resulted in Islam's spread outwards from Mecca towards both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and the creation of the Muslim world. Trading played an important role in the spread of Islam in several parts of the world, notably southeast Asia.

Muslim dynasties were soon established and subsequent empires such as those of the Abbasids, Fatimids, Almoravids, Seljukids, and Ajuurans, Adal and Warsangali in Somalia, Mughals in India, Safavids in Persia, and Ottomans in Anatolia were among the largest and most powerful in the world. The people of the Islamic world created numerous sophisticated centers of culture and science with far-reaching mercantile networks, travelers, scientists, hunters, mathematicians, doctors, and philosophers, all contributing to the Golden Age of Islam. Islamic expansion in South and East Asia fostered cosmopolitan and eclectic Muslim cultures in the Indian subcontinent, Malaysia, Indonesia, and China.

Within the first century of the establishment of Islam upon the Arabian Peninsula and the subsequent rapid expansion of the Arab Empire during the Muslim conquests, one of the most significant empires in world history was formed. For the subjects of this new empire, formerly subjects of the greatly reduced Byzantine and obliterated Sassanid empires, not much changed in practice. The objective of the conquests was of a practical nature more than anything else, as fertile land and water were scarce in the Arabian Peninsula. A real Islamization therefore only came about in the subsequent centuries.

Conversions to Islam

Historians distinguish between two separate strands of converts of the time. One is animists and polytheists of tribal societies of the Arabian Peninsula and the Fertile crescent; the other is the monotheistic populations of the Middle Eastern agrarian and urbanized societies.

For the polytheistic and pagan societies, apart from the religious and spiritual reasons each individual may have had, conversion to Islam "represented the response of a tribal, pastoral population to the need for a larger framework for

political and economic integration, a more stable state, and a more imaginative and encompassing moral vision to cope with the problems of a tumultuous society.” In contrast, for sedentary and often already monotheistic societies, “Islam was substituted for a Byzantine or Sassanian political identity and for a Christian, Jewish or Zoroastrian religious affiliation.” Initially, conversion was neither required nor necessarily wished for: “[The Arab conquerors] did not require the conversion as much as the subordination of non-Muslim peoples. At the outset, they were hostile to conversions because new Muslims diluted the economic and status advantages of the Arabs.”

Only in subsequent centuries, with the development of the religious doctrine of Islam and with that the understanding of the Muslim Ummah, did mass conversion take place. The new understanding by the religious and political leadership led in many cases to a weakening or breakdown of the social and religious structures of parallel religious communities such as Christians and Jews. With the weakening of many churches, for example, and with the favoring of Islam and the migration of substantial Muslim Turkish populations into the areas of Anatolia and the Balkans, the “social and cultural relevance of Islam” were enhanced and a large number of peoples were converted.

During the Abbasid Caliphate, expansion ceased and the central disciplines of Islamic philosophy, theology, law, and mysticism became more widespread, and the gradual conversions of the populations within the empire occurred. Significant conversions also occurred beyond the extents of the empire, such as that of the Turkic tribes in Central Asia and peoples living in regions south of the Sahara in Africa through contact with Muslim traders active in the area and Sufi orders. In Africa it spread along three routes—across the Sahara via trading towns such as Timbuktu, up the Nile Valley through the Sudan up to Uganda, and across the Red Sea and down East Africa through settlements such as Mombasa and Zanzibar. These initial conversions were of a flexible nature.

The Arab-Muslim conquests followed a general pattern of nomadic conquests of settled regions, whereby conquering peoples became the new military elite and reached a compromise with the old elites by allowing them to retain local political, religious, and financial authority. Peasants, workers, and merchants paid taxes, while members of the old and new elites collected them.

Policy Toward Non-Muslims

The Arab conquerors did not repeat the mistake made by the Byzantine and Sasanian empires, who had tried and failed to impose an official religion on subject populations, which had caused resentments that made the Muslim conquests more acceptable to them. Instead, the rulers of the new empire generally respected the traditional middle-Eastern pattern of religious pluralism, which was not one of equality but rather of dominance by one group over the others. After the end of military operations, which involved the sacking of some monasteries and confiscation of Zoroastrian fire temples in Syria and Iraq, the early caliphate was characterized by religious tolerance, and people of all ethnicities and religions blended in public life.

Before Muslims were ready to build mosques in Syria, they accepted Christian churches as holy places and shared them with local Christians. In Iraq and Egypt, Muslim authorities cooperated with Christian religious leaders. Numerous churches were repaired and new ones built during the Umayyad era.

Some non-Muslim populations did experience persecution, however. After the Muslim conquest of Persia, Zoroastrians were given dhimmi (non-Muslim) status and subjected to persecutions; discrimination and harassment began in the form of sparse violence. Zoroastrians were made to pay an extra tax called Jizya; if they failed, they were killed, enslaved, or imprisoned. Those paying Jizya were subjected to insults and humiliation by the tax collectors. Zoroastrians who were captured as slaves in wars were given their freedom if they converted to Islam.

Key Points

- The Islamic Golden Age started with the rise of Islam and establishment of the first Islamic state in 622.
- The introduction of paper in the 10th century enabled Islamic scholars to easily write manuscripts; Arab scholars also saved classic works of antiquity by translating them into various languages.
- The Arabs assimilated the scientific knowledge of the civilizations they had overrun, including the ancient Greek, Roman, Persian, Chinese, Indian, Egyptian, and Phoenician civilizations.
- Scientists advanced the fields of algebra, calculus, geometry, chemistry, biology, medicine, and astronomy.
- Many forms of art flourished during the Islamic Golden Age, including ceramics, metalwork, textiles, illuminated manuscripts, woodwork, and calligraphy.

Overview

The Islamic Golden Age refers to a period in the history of Islam, traditionally dated from the 8th century to the 13th century, during which much of the historically Islamic world was ruled by various caliphates and science, economic development, and cultural works flourished. This period is traditionally understood to have begun during the reign of the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid (786–809) with the inauguration of the House of Wisdom in Baghdad, where scholars from various parts of the world with different cultural backgrounds were mandated to gather and translate all of the world's classical knowledge into the Arabic language.

The end of the age is variously given as 1258 with the Mongolian Sack of Baghdad, or 1492 with the completion of the Christian Reconquista of the Emirate of Granada in Al-Andalus, Iberian Peninsula. During the Golden Age, the major Islamic capital cities of Baghdad, Cairo, and Córdoba became the main intellectual centers for science, philosophy, medicine, and education. The government heavily patronized scholars, and the best scholars and notable translators, such as Hunayn ibn Ishaq, had salaries estimated to be the equivalent of those of professional athletes today.

